Summary

Draft Project

"Setting the Stage for a Québec Youth Policy"

July 2000

Québec

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This draft version of a youth policy lays down the framework, primary orientations and lines of action that the Minister of State for Education and Youth seeks to open for consultation during this summer of the year 2000. This input will provide comments, opinions and proposals that will enrich and better focus the youth policy project to be prepared this coming fall. This framework essay will be completed following consultation in coordination with government departments and agencies and in cooperation with the Advisory Committee on Youth Policy formed by the Minister. The youth policy project should be tabled at the beginning of the year 2001.

Why create a youth policy?

At the heart of Québec's future and beyond all statistical forecasts, one of the critical factors at hand is determining the status of young people in the community and how they should be involved in it. To find a lasting solution for the dilemma raised by this factor, thinking patterns and values must be changed with regard to young people. If Québec is to be a vanguard and prosperous society where young people are actively involved in its development and renown, they must have the means at their disposal to completely fulfill their potential.

To attain this end, the government has set a certain number of objectives to share with those who will participate in preparing the youth policy:

- Ensuring young people full access to social, economic and cultural development that brings about changes in attitudes, values and thinking patterns.
- Creating an environment allowing young people to assume responsibility by taking their future into their own hands: allowing the development of their full potential.
- Soliciting the involvement of all social partners: young people themselves, their parents, government, businesses, unions, community organizations, local or regional communities, elected representatives and the media.
- Reflecting expectations, lifestyles and values of today's young people and reaching out to all, regardless of origin, region or socio-economic condition.

- Changing the course of realities that currently stand in the way of young people attempting to become a part of the mainstream, hence their involvement in building their community.

- Ensuring unity of purpose in government actions with regard to young people by centering government initiatives and commitment within the purview of a youth perspective.

The contents of the draft youth policy

The document is divided into two parts:

- **The first part** is devoted to elements of information that make up the general context in which the youth policy is situated.

  Initially, it gives some indications as to what is being done elsewhere in the world as regards youth policy: national priorities, values that are emphasized.

  It then situates the youth policy project within the course of various actions that have been undertaken for the young people of Québec: the creation of the Conseil permanent de la jeunesse (CPJ), the setting up of the Secrétariat à la jeunesse (SAJ) and catalytic actions such as the *Plan d'action jeunesse 1998-2001*.

  It also recalls the various expectations of young people and youth organizations regarding a youth policy, plus the consensus of the Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse in this matter.

  This first part gives an overall picture of young people in Québec society, while specifying to which age category the policy is addressed. Then, on the basis of statistical data and various observations, it illustrates the reality in which young people live in Québec.

- **The second part** in a way constitutes the heart of the draft policy project. It set the framework, proposes the orientations and lines of action that should be the main purpose of the consultation. This is the basis upon which the youth policy project will ultimately be developed. This second part ends with perspectives for implementing the youth policy. These last elements will only be formalized at the closing of the consultation and on the basis of priorities that will have been agreed upon in the policy.

Policy framework and orientations

The youth policy will pursue the main objective of favouring young people's role in exercising active citizenship by their full participation in community life, and will specify the means to adopt to attain this goal. It will strive for an objective of accessibility for all and equality for all young people, regardless of age, ethnicity, culture, functional autonomy, gender or sexual orientation. It will be based on the following orientations:

A center point for youth policy

Active citizenship for young people in Québec society

The youth policy represents a preferential means for uniting the orientations and actions of all participants, thereby channeling them towards the central objective of implementing conditions for exercising citizenship and truly making young people dynamic partners in the development of Québec.

First orientation

Channeling society's cultural reflexes to integrate the upcoming generation

Young people are a driving force for renewal and, for their community, an asset in a society that defines itself as being creative and innovative. A society committed to tomorrow's generation will invest in the transmission of know-how, skills, knowledge, its institutional and organizational memory, but also and above all, it will guarantee that the importance of this transmission be shared jointly and severally between generations. A society must also maintain the dynamic momentum of its various components, especially by taking specific action to make room for tomorrow's relief teams.

The trend in demography points to a decrease in the relative bearing of young people in society, which in turn will reduce their influence over orientations and decisions to be made collectively, even more so since their age group does not enjoy the right to vote. Given this, young people must, more than ever before, rely upon factors other than their numbers to fully assume their role in society.

Lines of action

- Young people's place in circles of influence.
- Young people's role in developing innovation and creativity.
- Planning and integrating the workforce of tomorrow.
- Handing down a lasting heritage.

Second orientation

Developing a sense of belonging

Social involvement marks and externalizes peoples' belonging to the community with which they identify themselves and to which they have the sense of making a significant contribution. This sense of belonging is akin to the concepts of solidarity and collective identity attached to common values. These concepts serve to define an inclusive society for everyone, regardless of their origins, culture, or the territory upon which they live. These values also consolidate identity and confidence in the way the community opens up to multifarious realities both here and abroad.

This sense of belonging must be instilled in Québec society because Québec is culturally diverse and will become even more so. There are established cultures that have co-existed for many years, and others that are more recent. Likewise, the sense of regional belonging is one characteristic of Québec cultural identity, which will also require reinforcement.

This sense of belonging must also be reinforced as Quebeckers turn outwards, towards a globalized economy and internationalized exchanges where Québec culture and identity meet head on with new ideas and cultural trends that know no borders and travel freely over new channels of communication.

Young people – probably more than other generations – are aware of and directly confronted by these influences. By developing a sense of belonging on their home ground, they will likely be able to find and define their bearings, thereby reinforcing their role as citizens and interacting community members. The economic and social involvement of all young people also constitutes an essential condition to fostering a sense of belonging. This involvement requires that all young people, including those who are confronted with varying degrees of marginalization, may be able to fully participate in a rich and diversified cultural environment.

Lines of action

- A cultural plurality with means of expression in an inclusive society.
- A Québec sense of belonging on the international scene.
- A sense of belonging facilitated by social involvement.

Third orientation

Implementing conditions favourable for personal development

Offering all young people equal chances to develop and become independent is at the heart of Québec's collective effort. Every young woman and man has a place, with all their individual differences and needs. Each aspect of the person must be developed integrally and coherently: starting from basic living conditions, the mastering of basic skills, the development of qualifications, hence having access to various types of

continuously evolving forms of apprenticeship, right to the development of ethical and societal values. Favouring the development of an individual comes before involving a citizen in society and this requires implementing conditions that are favourable for individual development. Were it necessary to set an objective, it would be to ensure 100% qualification of young people. This must be a priority and must resort both to the necessary means for achieving it and the elimination of potential obstacles.

Lines of action

- Education at the center of acquiring basic training.
- Recognizing the many paths to qualification.
- A decentralized and personalized proactive approach.
- Increased support for young families.
- Access to basic services.

Fourth orientation

Preparing professional life

The quest for acquiring individual autonomy is accompanied by one for financial independence, which means preparation and integration into a professional status. Current generations of young people are confronted by overall conditions on the labour and employment markets that are strikingly different from those faced by preceding generations.

Entry into the labour force and employment market differs depending on schooling and choice of career. Many are successful in making their place in the market. This does not, however, prevent some young people from experiencing the stress of uncertain employment and the inaccessibility of career privileges enjoyed by their predecessors.

Indeed, over the past years there has been a growing gap between standard jobs (regular full-time) and non-standard jobs. Young people are expressing dissatisfaction with professional working conditions that include part-time jobs, temporary jobs, independent jobs or equal opportunities.

Moreover, the phenomena of globalization and internationalization – characterized by rapid expansion owing to accelerated use of new information technologies and communications – are imposing the adaptation of training methods for tomorrow's work force. As such, the issue is now that future workers be equipped to confront new realities in a more competitive work force and be committed to the rush for greater innovation.

Society must bring together all the requisite conditions for preparing young people to venture into professional callings and achieve their insertion into the community.

Lines of action

- Professional and technical training.
- Continuous education and upgrading skills.
- Access to employment.
- Entrepreneurship for young people.
- Adapting legislation to new employment challenges.
- The conciliation of personal and family life with professional status.

Perspectives for implementing a youth policy

Within the framework of their youth policy and following the recommendations of the United Nations, most countries have established coordinating bodies and advisory organizations to state their opinions on government initiatives regarding young people.

An implementation plan

The youth policy must be followed by an implementation plan to be established on the basis of the agreed upon orientations and lines of action. This plan must be evaluated and renewed based on evolution as perceived once objectives are reached and situations attained, as well as other government policies in force.

The youth policy follow-up

The youth policy has one general characteristic: It is made to last. While it is followed up with immediate actions, some of its effects will only be felt on a mid-term basis. It must form a part of sustainable concern for young people within institutions and government practices, as well as in society at large. It must have a follow up, done at a pace different from that of the implementation phase, which will make it possible to assess the social effects resulting from the chosen orientations.

Coordination and concerted initiatives are the core elements many time identified as being the key to government actions undertaken in its relations and approach to young people. Hence, it will be up to government – following the consultation proceedings – to propose its choices.

Finally, vigilance must be exercised to ensure that the machinery for representation and coordination allow all young people to be heard and to express their expectations and needs. Is there a need – and if so, how may it be satisfied – to reinforce the roles and responsibilities of young people nationally, regionally and locally, where they represent a major factor of social vitality?